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Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives

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COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS OF  
OFFICIAL CONDUCT

July 17, 1998

Lori E. MacWilliams  
55 Brompton Court  
Orchard Park, New York 14127

Dear Lori:

Thank you for contacting my office expressing your views on the proposed multi-billion dollar settlement between tobacco corporations and the government. I appreciated hearing from you.

Within the last year it appeared that a tobacco settlement would likely be reached. This related to the June 1997 tobacco settlement agreement negotiated between the state attorney generals and the major tobacco companies. It would have required that tobacco companies pay \$365.5 billion in compensation to private litigants and state governments, as well as fund public anti-smoking and health education campaigns. It also would have placed restrictions on tobacco companies marketing and sales practices and be subject to federal regulations of nicotine in exchange for protection against future lawsuits.

Congressional uncertainty about whether or not this was a good deal and in the interest of the American people led to indecision. This is and the possibility of more strongly worded tobacco legislation led to a tobacco industry withdrawal from the settlement on April 8. Their withdrawal accompanied a statement by RJR Nabisco's chief executive officer, Steven F. Goldstone, "Congress wants to punish the tobacco industry, rather than take advantage of the historic opportunity to create a national tobacco policy. President Clinton sounded back that the industry's actions were a big mistake and that legislation would likely move forward with or without their participation. I concur with President Clinton's assessment of the situation. It does not appear likely that the tobacco industry's departure from the settlement will alter the course of our pursuit of a legislative remedy to counteract the influence of tobacco on our nation's health and well being.

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In closing, there is no doubt in my mind that smoking is one of the most serious threats to public health in America, causing approximately 420,000 deaths annually. Due to the health related concerns manifested in smoking, please know that I will be paying close attention to this issue and any developments here in Congress related to it.

Should you have any concerns about this or any other issue, please do not hesitate to contact me. Again, thank you for contacting me.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Chaka Fattah". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chaka Fattah  
Member of Congress

CF:maw

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